3: Imperial Gazetteer G-3 (1889-95) 1909 AV1 Kashmir
Dard AV3

In Gilgit, as in Astor, there are few social subdivisions, for the people are forced to depend on themselves for most wants of life. The language spoken is Shīnā, though only a small percentage of the population is Shīn. The religion is Islām, the Shiah sect preponderating. There is an entire absence of fanaticism. The national character is mild, and the men are unwarlike. The Gilgiti is attached to his home and his family, and is an industrious cultivator. Both men and women are strongly built, and of a fairer complexion than the people of India. The women paint their faces with a kind of thin paste to keep the skin soft and to prevent sunburn. They are fond of flowers, and decorate their caps with irises and roses.

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Agriculture.

The cultivation is of a high character. The fields are carefully tilled, heavily manured, and amply irrigated. In Gilgit itself good rice is grown; and crops of wheat, barley, maize, millet, buckwheat, pulses, rapeseed, and cotton are raised, while fruit is plentiful. There is very little grazing land, and cattle are scarce. Lucerne grass is largely cultivated for fodder.

241

In the cold dry climate of Astor cultivation is carried on to an elevation of 9,000 feet. It depends entirely on irrigation by little channels known as *kul*. The chief crops are wheat, barley, peas, maize, millet, and buckwheat. The people pay great attention to fodder and cultivate the lucerne grass. Cultivation is precarious in Astor, as the crops frequently do not ripen owing to the cold, and there are several vegetable pests in the shape of worms.

Minerals.

Many of the streams are rich in gold, especially those which flow from Hunza and Nagar, and also the Indus above Chilās. Gold-washing is carried on in the winter chiefly by the poorer members of the population, though the work is often remunerative. At Chilās whole families live by the work. The gold is of fair quality, the best being twenty carats. The Bagrot valley is celebrated for gold-washing, and contains many signs of mineral wealth.

135

Commerce and trade.

The only manufacture is the weaving of woollen cloth (*pattū*), but this is for home use and not for sale. Trade does not flourish. The local wants are few, and the only chance of Gilgit becoming an important commercial centre lies in the opening of a trade route to Yārkand. The chief staple of import is salt. Russian chintz is brought down from Yārkand, and is said to be more durable than the English article.

286 439

Roads.

The most important roads are those leading to India. The 10-foot road over the Burzil and Rāj Diāngan passes has been

487

4: Durand G-3 (1888-93) 1900 AV1 Kashmir
Dard AV 3
Astor

country, and close under whose shadow we were marching,—magnificent views, giving an overpowering impression of towering height. Locally it is called Deomir, "the mountain of the gods," a fitting name.

The last few marches showed miles of terraced land out of cultivation, the result of the incursions of the murderous Chilasis who raided from the Indus valley. In a country where every foot of cultivation has to be won with heavy toil from nature, nothing appeals so to your heart as the sight of deserted land and ruined homesteads.

Finally, after thirteen days' marching, we reached Astor, which used to be the capital of a kingdom important enough in a small way in the Hindu-Kush. The Sikhs absorbed it, all that remains of its former glories being a fort now held by the Dogras.

Astor boasts of a bazaar, the first met with since leaving Kashmir; beyond it there are only two, at Gilgit and Chitral. Most of the trade was at this time done by itinerant traders from Koli and Palas in the Indus valley, who brought goods from India, taking back gold-dust and products of Central Asia, and who penetrated into the remotest glens. The more peaceful state of things which we introduced has given a start to Gilgit, which is now becoming the emporium of this portion of the Hindu-Kush.

I here made the acquaintance of Bahadur Khan, Raja of Astor, the representative of the old ruling race, an old gentleman whose honesty, intimate knowledge of the country, and connection with all the local rajas were to be of the greatest value to me on more than one occasion. Deprived of his kingdom and very poor, living on a small grant of land

† [Nanga Parbat mountain — Analyst]